

REP. RICHARD CURTIS



REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD CURTIS

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Committees:

- Education
- Health Care (*Assistant Ranking Republican*)
- Transportation
- State Assemblies for Emergency Response

Leadership:

- Assistant Republican Whip

Internet page:

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/curtis.htm>

Legislative Information on the Internet:

www.leg.wa.gov

State Government on the Internet:

www.access.wa.gov

Fall 2005

Dear Friends,

This year's legislative session ended before summer, but some of the laws that were made didn't take effect until the last part of July. This newsletter includes a look at decisions made about taxes and spending and the effects they could have on our economy. It also includes a response mailer so that I may hear from you.

I am honored to serve as your voice in the Legislature and remain committed to serving the interests of our district and Southwest Washington. Please feel free to contact me at any time to share your opinion or ask questions about state government. My district office will remain open through the end of the year and we'll be more than glad to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Richard Curtis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" and "C".

Rep. Richard Curtis



Curtis appointed to national homeland security caucus

It's an honor to be the House Republicans' appointee to a nationwide caucus for the support of homeland security and emergency response. State Assemblies for Emergency Response (SAFE) was recently created to serve as a collective voice for homeland security and first responder issues. Members include state legislators, state homeland security directors, state fire marshals and police chiefs from throughout the nation.

One of my top priorities as a member of SAFE will be ensuring that federal monies designated for homeland security and emergency services actually reach first responders at the local level. The group will also work to share information, research and the best practices between states to ensure greater safety against terrorism.

The appointment fits well with my experience as a fire captain-paramedic with the Vancouver Fire Department and my 18 years of work in the emergency services field.

REP. RICHARD CURTIS



During the Legislative Session, Rep. Curtis hosted a group of home-schooled students who came to visit the state capitol.

Unnecessary tax increases fuel budget overspending

Over my opposition, several taxes were increased or revived this year to allow an additional \$1 billion in spending beyond the revenue already coming in to state coffers. The tax on a pack of cigarettes went up 60 cents in July and the tax on a liter of liquor increased \$1.33. These tax hikes provide an even greater incentive for area residents to shop in Oregon, which could adversely affect our local economy.

There's a new tax on extended warranties for household appliances or electronic equipment, and a new "death tax" was adopted to replace the estate tax thrown out by the state Supreme Court in February (it was tied to the federal estate tax, which is being phased out).

These unnecessary tax increases were combined with an additional \$233 million in one-time budget shifts from other accounts to feed an unsustainable general operating budget that took effect July 1 (Senate Bill 6090). One of the most disappointing actions was the meddling with the state pension fund -- millions that should have been invested for retirees ended up in the general fund instead.

Budget writers didn't even follow the "Priorities of Government" process that had limited budget growth to 3 percent for 2003-05 and protected our state from general-fund tax increases. Instead, they tossed out the 1993 voter-approved law (Initiative 601) that established strict state spending controls and required a two-thirds majority vote of the Legislature to raise taxes, and increased spending by 12.4 percent (\$2.9 billion) over the next two years. The budget leaves a reserve of just .07 percent and -- by the governor's own admission -- sets the state up for a \$1 billion shortfall next biennium.

Meth fight should not usurp law-abiding citizens' rights

I am proud to be a leader in fighting the growing methamphetamine problem in Washington. After all, meth is very destructive to our communities and to those involved with this horrible drug. At the same time, I am concerned lawmakers may be going overboard with new laws that punish law-abiding citizens while providing no guarantees to slow the manufacturing and sales of meth.

In Oregon, if you want to buy ephedrine-based cold medications such as Sudafed or Actifed -- drugs that have previously been sold over the counter -- a new law now requires you to first obtain a prescription from a doctor. I am very hesitant to support knee-jerk reaction laws like this one that will only serve to drive up the cost of health care for law-abiding citizens.

My goal is to address the problems that have enabled the meth epidemic to grow in our communities -- problems such as the sale of large quantities of these products sold out of the back doors of stores, kids shoplifting cold medications from store shelves, and ephedrine products being purchased by underage youth and being used for admission to parties.

Washington's laws already prohibit retailers from selling more than three packages to the same person in a 24-hour period, which addresses the first problem.

To address the underage purchasing and shoplifting issues, most stores have voluntarily moved ephedrine-based products to behind their counters, requiring customers to show ID to prove they are over the age of 18 to get the actual product. A new state law, however, will make this practice mandatory beginning Oct. 1. In addition, retailers will be required to keep logbooks beginning Jan. 1 of those who purchase cold medications.

I support government functioning in its role as a safety net on such issues. However, I do not support government overreacting by increasing onerous regulations that prevent law-abiding citizens from getting their cold medications when they need them. Instead of punishing law-abiding citizens, we need to allow our previous regulations to work. We also need to go after the law-breakers by giving enforcement officers the tools they need to investigate these crimes, and especially crack down on the movement of illegal drugs from the Mexican drug cartels along the I-5 corridor.



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REPORT TO THE VOTERS

Legislature approves Curtis' law enforcement-firefighter retirement bill



I prime-sponsored a measure that gives law enforcement officers and firefighters greater flexibility in their retirement plans. This bipartisan legislation gained approval in the Legislature during the 2005 session.

House Bill 1270 allows members of the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Retirement System Plan 2 (LEOFF 2) to work at another state job and either earn pension credit at the new job while their original pension credits are suspended, or to continue receiving their old pension but not earn pension credit in the new system.

In the past, LEOFF 2 members who wanted go back to work only part time would be forced to give up their pensions. This bill provides a reasonable option for LEOFF 2 members who want to work part time, but does not allow "double dipping" of pension benefits.



I'm here to serve as well as represent you!

Solving problems is what being a legislator is all about. I work for you throughout the year, not just when the Legislature is in session. If you are having difficulties dealing with a state agency, or if you have questions about state government, or if you have suggestions or concerns about legislation, give me a call. For your convenience, I have a district office in Camas, which is staffed through the legislative interim (the time when the Legislature is not in session). When the Legislature is in session (beginning in January), I can be reached at my Olympia office.

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Return to my office with this mail panel showing.

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Please
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stamp
here

REP. RICHARD CURTIS

What are your priorities?

Learning more about the issues that are of most concern to people in our area will help me to do a better job of representing you in the Legislature. Please take a moment to write to me and let me know about the issues involving state government that are on your mind. When you are done, clip this page from the rest of the newsletter, fold and mail it back with the mail panel (the one with my address in the middle) showing. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Your comments here: _____

Would you like more information?

If you would like periodic updates on legislative issues, please fill out this section. Be sure to include your e-mail address if you would like to receive updates via e-mail.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____

Issues

For future correspondence, which topics interest you most?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> budget and taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crime and security | <input type="checkbox"/> education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> election reform | <input type="checkbox"/> environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> growth management | <input type="checkbox"/> health care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jobs and the economy | <input type="checkbox"/> property taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> social services | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) _____ | |

- Your priorities
- Homeland security
- The mess of meth
- Budget overspends

INSIDE

2005 REPORT TO THE VOTERS

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